



# GCSE Subject Criteria for English



June 2014

Ofqual/14/5476  
(previous version: Ofqual/11/5012)

# Contents

The criteria.....	3
Introduction .....	3
Aims and learning outcomes.....	3
Subject content .....	4
Assessment objectives.....	6
Scheme of assessment.....	7
Grade descriptions.....	7
Grade boundaries for GCSE English speaking and listening assessments.....	12

# The criteria

## Introduction

GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject.

They provide the framework within which the awarding organisation creates the detail of the specification.

## Aims and learning outcomes

1. GCSE specifications in English should encourage learners to be inspired, moved and changed by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study. They should prepare learners to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices, to use language to participate effectively in society and employment and to develop their enthusiasm for reading.
2. GCSE specifications in English must enable learners to:
  - demonstrate skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing necessary to communicate with others confidently, effectively, precisely and appropriately;
  - express themselves creatively and imaginatively;
  - understand the patterns, structures and conventions of written and spoken English;
  - select and adapt speech and writing to different situations and audiences;
  - understand how variations in spoken and written language relate to identity and cultural diversity;
  - become critical readers of a range of texts, including multimodal texts;
  - use reading to gain access to knowledge and to develop their own skills as writers;
  - understand that texts from the English, Welsh and Irish literary heritage have been influential and significant over time and explore the meaning of these today;
  - understand how literature from other cultures is influential;
  - connect ideas, themes and issues, drawing on a range of texts.

## **Subject content**

3. The content of GCSE specifications in English must reflect the learning outcomes.
4. GCSE specifications in English must specify the content in ways that promote an integrated approach to speaking and listening, reading and writing.
5. GCSE specifications in English must be consistent with the National Curriculum Key Stage 4 programme of study requirements for England.
6. GCSE specifications in English must allow learners to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of English in the:
  - daily world;
  - world of imagination as specified below.
7. GCSE specifications in English must require learners to:
  - analyse spoken and written language, exploring impact and how it is achieved;
  - express ideas and information clearly, precisely, accurately and appropriately in spoken and written communication;
  - form independent views and challenge what is heard or read on the grounds of reason, evidence or argument;
  - understand and use the conventions of written language, including grammar, spelling and punctuation;
  - explore questions, solve problems and develop ideas;
  - engage with and make fresh connections between ideas, texts and words;
  - experiment with language to create effects to engage the audience;
  - reflect and comment critically on their own and others' use of language.
8. In speaking and listening, GCSE specifications in English must require learners to:
  - present and listen to information and ideas;
  - respond appropriately to the questions and views of others;

- participate in a range of real-life contexts in and beyond the classroom, adapting talk to situation and audience and using standard English where appropriate;
  - select and use a range of techniques and creative approaches to explore ideas, texts and issues in scripted and improvised work.
9. In reading, GCSE specifications in English must require learners to:
- understand how meaning is constructed through words, sentences and whole texts, recognising and responding to the effects of language variation;
  - evaluate the ways in which texts may be interpreted differently according to the perspective of the reader;
  - read a rich range of prose, poetry and drama, including a text from the English, Welsh or Irish literary heritage, a play by Shakespeare and a text from a different culture or tradition;
  - understand how texts from the literary heritage have been influential and significant over time;
  - explore how texts from different cultures and traditions may reflect or influence values and assumptions.
10. GCSE specifications in English must require learners to write accurately and fluently:
- choosing content and adapting style and language to a wide range of forms, media, contexts, audiences and purposes;
  - adapting form to a wide range of styles and genres.

## Assessment objectives

11. All specifications in English must require learners to demonstrate their ability to meet the assessment objectives set out in the table below and must weight the marks for those objectives as set out in the table below:

	Assessment objectives	Weighting toward final GCSE mark
<b>AO1</b>	<p><b>Speaking and listening</b></p> <p>Speak to communicate clearly and purposefully; structure and sustain talk, adapting it to different situations and audiences; use standard English and a variety of techniques as appropriate.</p> <p>Listen and respond to speakers' ideas, perspectives and how they construct and express their meanings. Interact with others, shaping meanings through suggestions, comments and questions and drawing ideas together.</p> <p>Create and sustain different roles.</p>	0% <sup>1</sup>
<b>AO2</b>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Read and understand texts, selecting material appropriate to purpose, collating from different sources and making comparisons and cross-references as appropriate.</p> <p>Develop and sustain interpretations of writers' ideas and perspectives.</p> <p>Explain and evaluate how writers use linguistic, grammatical, structural and presentational features to achieve effects and engage and influence the reader.</p> <p>Understand texts in their social, cultural and historical contexts.</p>	From 40–60%

<sup>1</sup> Stated as 0 per cent as, in GCSE English, results of assessments in speaking and listening are not allowed to form part of the weighting toward the final GCSE mark.

<b>AO3</b>	<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Write clearly, effectively and imaginatively, using and adapting forms and selecting vocabulary appropriate to task and purpose in ways that engage the reader.</p> <p>Organise information and ideas into structured and sequenced sentences, paragraphs and whole texts, using a variety of linguistic and structural features to support cohesion and overall coherence.</p> <p>Use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate punctuation and spelling.</p>	<p>From 40–60%</p> <p><b><i>At least one third of the available marks for AO3 should be allocated to the use of a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate punctuation and spelling.</i></b></p>
------------	---	---

## Scheme of assessment

12. The overall scheme of assessment in a specification in GCSE English must allocate a weighting of 60 per cent of the final GCSE mark to external assessment and a weighting of 40 per cent of the final GCSE mark to controlled assessment. However, as noted above, this does not include assessments in speaking and listening, which are not allowed to form part of the weighting toward the final GCSE mark.
13. Question papers in English must be targeted at either foundation or higher tier.
14. GCSE assessments in English must allocate a weighting of 45–55 per cent for the functional elements of English.

## Grade descriptions

15. Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by learners awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.
16. The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the learner has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of learners' performance in the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.
17. The final GCSE qualification grade and grades for any GCSE English

assessments other than speaking and listening assessments must be determined in accordance with the grade descriptions in the table below:

Grade	Grade description
<b>A</b>	<p>Learners respond personally and persuasively to a variety of texts, developing interpretations and evaluating how details of language, grammar, structure and presentation engage and affect the reader. They identify and discuss writers' perspectives in narrative, argument, explanation or analysis. They choose apt quotations and make telling comparisons and cross-references that illuminate the purpose and meanings of texts, explaining the impact of their social, cultural and historical contexts where appropriate.</p> <p>Learners' writing shows confident, assured control of a range of forms and styles appropriate to task and purpose. Texts engage and hold the reader's interest through logical argument, persuasive force or creative delight. Linguistic and structural features are used skilfully to sequence texts and achieve coherence. A wide range of accurate sentence structures ensures clarity; choices of vocabulary, punctuation and spelling are ambitious, imaginative and correct.</p>



<b>C</b>	<p>Learners understand and demonstrate how meaning and information are conveyed in a range of texts. They make personal and critical responses, referring to specific aspects of language, grammar, structure and presentational devices to justify their views. They successfully compare and cross-reference aspects of texts and explain convincingly how they may vary in purpose and how they achieve different effects. They comment on how social, cultural and historical contexts affect readers' responses to texts.</p> <p>Learners' writing shows successful adaptation of form and style to different tasks and for various purposes. They use a range of sentence structures and varied vocabulary to create different effects and engage the reader's interest. Paragraphing is used effectively to make the sequence of events or development of ideas coherent and clear to the reader. Sentence structures are varied; punctuation and spelling are accurate and sometimes bold.</p>
----------	--

<b>F</b>	<p>Learners describe the main ideas, themes or argument in a range of texts and refer to specific aspects or details when justifying their views. They make simple comparisons and cross-references that show some awareness of how texts achieve their effects through writers' use of linguistic, grammatical, structural and presentational devices. They are aware that some features of texts relate to their specific social, cultural and historical contexts.</p> <p>Learners' writing shows some adaptation of form and style for different tasks and purposes. It communicates simply and clearly with the reader. Sentences sequence events or ideas logically; vocabulary is sometimes chosen for variety and interest. Paragraphing is straightforward but effective; the structure of sentences, including some that are complex, is usually correct. Spelling and basic punctuation are mostly accurate.</p>
----------	---

18. The final grade for GCSE English speaking and listening assessments must be determined in accordance with the grade descriptions in the table below. These assessments are graded separately from the final GCSE qualification grade.

Grade	Grade Description
5	Learners select suitable styles and registers of spoken English for a range of situations and contexts, showing assured use of standard English where appropriate. They confidently vary sentence structures and choose from a broad repertoire of vocabulary to express information, ideas and feelings in an engaging manner. They initiate conversations and demonstrate sensitive listening through contributions that sustain and develop discussion. They recognise and fulfil the demands of different roles, whether in formal settings or creative activities.
3	Learners adapt their talk to the demands of different situations and contexts. They recognise when standard English is required and use it confidently. They use different sentence structures and select vocabulary so that information, ideas and feelings are communicated clearly and the listener's interest is engaged. They explain and evaluate how they and others use and adapt spoken language for specific purposes. Through careful listening and by developing their own and others' ideas, they make significant contributions to discussion and participate effectively in creative activities.
1	Learners talk confidently in familiar situations, showing some awareness of purpose and of listeners' needs. They convey information, develop ideas and describe feelings clearly, using the main features of standard English as appropriate. They listen with concentration and make relevant responses to others' ideas and opinions. They show some awareness of how they and others use and adapt spoken language for specific purposes. In formal and creative activities, they attempt to meet the demands of different roles.

## Grade boundaries for GCSE English speaking and listening assessments

19. The provisions of the appendices to the *GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice* (May 2011), which refer to the setting of grade boundaries on an eight-grade scale from A\* to G, do not apply to GCSE English speaking & listening assessments. For these assessments, the three key grade boundaries must be dealt with in the following sequence:
- 3/2
  - 5/4
  - 1/ungraded.
20. All other grade boundaries for these assessments must be determined arithmetically:
- the 4/3 grade boundary is obtained by dividing the mark interval between the 5/4 and 3/2 boundaries by two. Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the grade 4 interval;
  - the 2/1 grade boundary is obtained by dividing the mark interval between the 3/2 and 1/ungraded boundaries by two. Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the grade 2 interval.

We wish to make our publications widely accessible. Please contact us if you have any specific accessibility requirements.

Published by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in 2014

© Crown copyright 2014

You may re-use this publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the [Open Government Licence](#). To view this licence, [visit The National Archives](#); or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU; or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

This publication is also available on our website at [www.ofqual.gov.uk](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation	
Spring Place	2nd Floor
Coventry Business Park	Glendinning House
Herald Avenue	6 Murray Street
Coventry CV5 6UB	Belfast BT1 6DN

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346